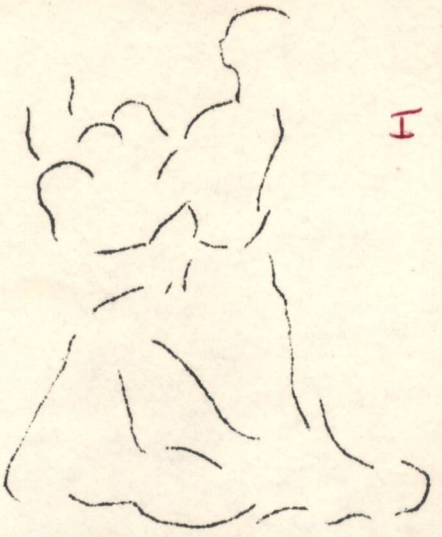
S A C R E D
D A N C E
G U I L D
N E W S L E T T E R
F A L L I S S U E 1958

Avis-Ann Parke, Editor
21 Pine Street
Peterborough, New Hampshire



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A REMINDER

During a recent check-up of the membership list of the Sacred Dance Guild we have found that several of our valued members have not sent in the annual dues of $2 for the current year--February 1958 to February 1959.

It is the dues that make it possible for us to issue the NEWSLETTER.

Your new membership card will be mailed to you upon receipt of your dues.

--Josephine Rice, Treas.

**********SPECIAL EVENT**********

October 16, 8:00 p.m.
Park Street Congregational Church
Bridgeport, Conn.

Fairfield Modern Dance Group
Louise Mattlage, Director

Program of religious dance in the sanctuary using biblical material as starting point. Has given this program at Yale Divinity School and Juilliard School of Music.

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FALL WORKSHOP

The Fall Workshop of the Sacred Dance Guild was held at the South Congregational Church, Hartford, Conn., on September 29th. There were 31 attending, most of whom were already members of the Guild, and several joined the group that day. The fact that everyone who was there was a director already doing sacred dance work, or was just organizing a new group, was a most encouraging factor.

Virginia Lucke of Storrs, Conn., led the group in a most helpful technique and exercise session. Betty Simpson of Manchester, Conn., taught her choreography of the hymn tune "Lobe Den Herren" with words from the Presbyterian hymnal, suitable for Thanksgiving or any service of praise. Before lunch, Barbara Hyland of West Cheshire helped the group to learn her choreography of "O Come All Ye Faithful."

After lunch, Miss Hyland resumed her workshop, and an original grouping of Christmas selections was presented. Her pianist, Mr. Benjamin A. Machan of Woodbury, who played for her workshop, composed the beautiful music for these. This music with complete instructions may be purchased for $5 by sending to Miss Hyland at 401 Main St., West Cheshire, Conn. We welcome Barbara Hyland and Mr. Machan as two new members of the Guild.

The Rev. Robert Storer was unable to attend the meeting, but arrangements will be made for his workshop to be given for those who need help in the organization of a dance choir in a future meeting.

There was a short business meeting following the afternoon workshop, at which time the N.Y. area was decided upon for the February meeting, further details of which will come later.

The Guild thanks Mrs. Helen Gray for the hospitality of her church, and also the fine work of the leaders of the day's sessions.

--Beatrice Jenkins

REPORT OF PEMBROKE WORKSHOP

On July 9, 1958, a group of Sacred Dance Choir Directors and prospective directors assembled for an all-day training session at the Congregational Center at Pembroke, N. H. The course was under the direction of Mrs. W. M. Rayton, Director of the Dance Choir of the Congregational Church of Hanover, N. H., and a director on the board of the Sacred Dance Guild.

Mrs. Rayton opened the morning session with valuable information regarding the purpose and procedure of the organization of a sacred dance choir. Mrs. George Chenell, a pupil of Hanya Holm and a modern dance teacher, gave a course in preparatory exercise routines for dance choir work. Mrs. Laurence Ackerman, a major in physical education and modern dance, completed the morning session with further suggestion on suitable exercises for poise, balance and control.

Following the luncheon, Mrs. Roswell Atwood, corresponding secretary of the Sacred Dance Guild, gave a report on the 3-day training course conducted in June at Jacob's Pillow under the personal direction of Ted Shawn.

The afternoon program, concentrating on the field of techniques, opened with a processional arranged and directed by Mrs. Rayton using the entire group.

The group was then divided into three groups and, under the direction of Mrs. Rayton, Mrs. Ackerman and Mrs. T. J. Frizzell (director of dance choir at Congregational Church of Charlestown, Maine), improvised their own interpretations of "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind." It was an interesting experience to witness the different approaches of each group as they presented their interpretations at the altar.

Each of the separate groups was then led into more advanced work under the leadership of Mrs. Ackerman, Mrs. Frizzell and Mrs. Theo L. Rice, Director of the Sacred Dance Choir of the Melrose Highlands Congregational Church, Melrose, Mass. Each leader chose her own subject and the completed dance numbers were presented, in costume, as part of the Service of Prayer and Praise given at the altar at the end of the afternoon with the Rev. Ruth Budd officiating.

During the dinner hour there was a general evaluation period during which all agreed that the day had been both helpful and inspiring.

--Josephine Rice

JACOB'S PILLOW

Among the forty students assembled at Jacob's Pillow, Lee, Mass., last June for a special 3-day course in religious dance, were several members of the Sacred Dance Guild. Conducted and taught by Ted Shawn and his staff, this was the first such course to be offered there.

Mary Jane Wolbers, Executive Council member, is compiling information on the contemporary use of dance as a religious art form. All choir directors, ministers, religious educators and laymen are urged to write Mrs. Wolbers about the work they are doing and any other activity in the field about which they have knowledge. (Mrs. Charles Wolbers, 6 Excelsior Ave., New Paltz, N. Y.) Copies of programs, services, clippings and the like will also be gratefully received.

The members of the Guild appreciate your interest and consideration.

--Mary Jane Wolbers

FESTIVAL OF PRAYER AND PRAISE

The third annual Festival of Prayer and Praise, sponsored by the Sacred Dance Guild, was held June 5th at the Hancock Congregational Church, Lexington, Mass.

From 2 to 5 in the afternoon there was a demonstration by the Sacred Dance Choir of Waltham, using Malotte's "Lord's Prayer," music by the De Pauw University Glee Club, and the Psalm "I Will Lift up Mine Eyes unto the Hills," with a choral reading. There were four girls, with Mrs. Susie Shelton, director, participating in the two well-done presentations. Upon request of the group, their interpretation of "Were You There when They

Crucified My Lord" was explained and demonstrated.

Following this, a round-table discussion was led by the Rev. Robert Storer. Everyone felt free to ask questions, and color, material, fitting, length of robes were discussed; whether to appear with bare feet, or with peds or nylons; whether young people who have been in a dance choir prior to high school still enjoy participation upon entering high; how often it is advisable to present programs in the church; whether we ought to get the whole idea of a section, or bit by bit; whether we should or should not use men. All these are important to us all, and we all must have profited by each other's contributions to the discussion.

Mrs. Jane Knight then gave the background for her choreography of the 23rd Psalm. Many of the group joined her in working out the number, and I am sure we all enjoyed the evening presentation of the same number as her group did it.

The evening festival was presented by the Hancock Church, Congregational, Mrs. Borngesser, Director, Winchester Unitarian Church, Rev. Robert Storer and Jane Renz, directors; Fall River Central Congregational, Mrs. Webb Wright, director; Central Congregational Church, Manchester, Conn., Mrs. Charles Baxter and Mrs. Clifford Simpson, directors; March Liturgical Dance Choir, Heather Keene, director; Old First Church of Springfield, Mrs. Janet Knight, director. All of the selections were well done, the robes varied in color and style, the approaches interesting and inspiring. Mr. Herbert Irvine was a sympathetic organist, playing lovely background music where it was needed, and fine accompaniments for the vocal groups.

I feel that the solo work of Mrs. Jane Renz should have special mention, as her work was a very unusual and moving interpretation, leaving no doubt in one's mind as to what she was intending to communicate. Though the body is full of grace, and the technique flawless, if those who are observing are confused by what is being said in the dance, it is nothing, it seems to me.

The next meeting of the Sacred Dance Guild is to be held in Hartford, at Helen Gray's church on Sept. 29 in the form of an all-day workshop. --Beatrice C. Jenkins

JEAN MILLER
1751 Yale Court
Wantagh, N. Y.

New York, April 1925

Copy. CREDO

I d e m a n d o f t h e D a n c e . . . .

I demand of the Dance - more than any of the other arts - that it reveals the God in man. Not merely the scientific and beautiful forms that his body can be made to assume, but the very divine self.

I demand of the Dance - as it sweeps through the centuries - that it leave a noble influence in the race that evolves it, and not only the clever and brilliant record of its human actors.

I demand of the Dance, that through it the visions and ideals of humanity find expression and not merely its ephemeral and distorted concepts.

The Dance should be the first and most inspiring of the human arts. It should be held responsible for the health, beauty and moral balance of the race, for it is the business of the Dance to lead and not to follow.

The Dance should not be content to merely reiterate the errors, evils and grotesque obscenities of its contemporary life. To be sure, these matters now occupy the thoughts of the amusement world. They will continue to occupy the thoughts of part of the world always. But if the Dance is to sweep down the years, leaving a lasting beauty and brightness in its path; if it is to have its part in pressing back the animality and confusion of the world, its leaders will have to have a greater torch than can possibly be lighted from a concept of mere mechanical proficiency.

For when the Dance has merely reflected the superficial life and customs of any given generation, expressed in its passing fashions and limited in ugly movements, it has followed its generation, not led it.

What the body of man can do in its trained and athletic sense - to jump, to run, to leap, to turn, to spring - these are all interesting and beautiful exhibitions of the body as a physical instrument, but to call these and all other evidences of mere physical prowess - "The Dance" - is to at once belittle and circumscribe the true meaning of the word to the mental limitation of a particular school.

All gestures, all technique, all inventions, all varieties of motion, that we now know, and those yet to be unfolded, are the bodily words needed to tell the story of man's active and inquiring mind. But the mere rendering of any one word, or set of words, however technically or beautifully executed, can never raise the expression of these words to the rank of great art.

(Unfinished.)
(Manuscript seems lost.)